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Rules for Local Comprehensive Planning



Georgia
Department of
Community Affairs

October 4, 2017

Jon West and Jake Grabowsky | DCA

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Public Participation

- To meet the minimum standards, you must:
 - Identify Stakeholders
 - Identify Participation Techniques
 - Actually involve the stakeholders using those techniques
 - Hold Legally-Required Hearings
- MUST have a Steering Committee that MUST include Elected Officials and Economic Development folks
- **But, there's no longer a front-end approval**

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Public Participation

- But, **the plan must document what the community did** (ideally in an appendix)
- Report must include (at minimum):
 - list of stakeholders involved
 - steering committee composition
 - number and types of participation events
 - who attended participation events
 - Participation in developing Comm. Goals
 - SWOT used to generate Needs and Opps

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Public Participation: *Why is this important?*

- Plan should reflect COMMUNITY's vision
- It's the people's plan (as in "We the people...")
- Public ownership—investment of energy/effort
- Broad input from varied sectors—"buy in"
- Public support of the plan encourages its use by officials

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Planning as Priority-Setting

Long Term
Community Goals

Immediate
Needs & Opportunities

↓ ↓

Community Work Program

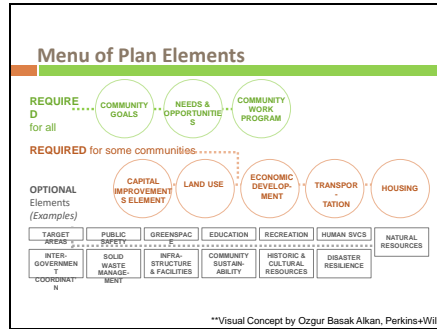
Plans deal with both the immediate and the long term but pull it all together in the Work Program

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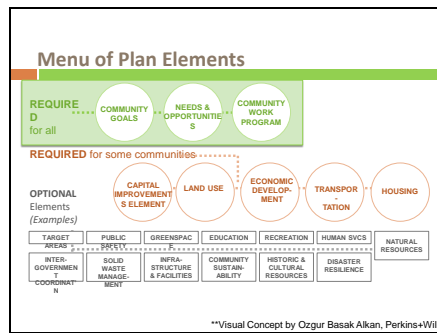
The Standards: *Overview*

- Menu of Plan Elements (Community Chooses)
- Each Element Has Only Brief, Flexible Guidance
- Only Three Elements are Required of All
- Five Elements are Required for Some Communities (depending on local conditions)
- Substitution of Existing Plans/Elements Encouraged
- No Update Required for Some Plan Elements
- Other Elements Updated Every Five Years
- RCs and communities can adapt the rules to fit local needs (e.g. plans may be significantly scaled-down for very small communities)

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DCA Provides Tools

- Statistical and demographic data provided by DCA for FREE, upon request
- QCOs provide useful “conversation starters”

➤ *Use to educate the public and fact-check their input*

➤ **No requirement** that it be included in the final document—if it is, it should be separate from the “meat” of the plan

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Standards & Examples

REVIEWED for all

COMMUNITY GOALS

CONSISTENT WITH REGIONAL PROGRAMS

- **REQUIRED FOR ALL communities**
- **1 or a Combination of any of the following:**
 - General Vision Statement
 - List of Community Goals
 - Community Policies
 - Character Areas & Defining Narrative

• *Create this element ONCE potentially drawing from previous plans.*

• *Update it at the discretion of the local government.*

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Vision Statement

FROM THE RULES

- **“General Vision Statement.** Include a general statement that **paints a picture** of what the community desires to become, providing a **complete description of the development patterns** to be encouraged within the jurisdiction.”

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[illegible]

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Structuring the Comp Plan

Goals – Policies – Activities

- **Goals** articulate a set of broad, overarching ideals for which the community is working.
- **Policies** provide ongoing guidance and direction to local officials for making decisions that support achieving the community's vision/goals.
- **Implementation Activities** specific activities the community plans to undertake (e.g. activities, initiatives, programs, ordinances, administrative systems) in order to implement policies and achieve goals

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Structuring the Comp Plan

Goals – Policies - Activities

- **Goal 1:** Our community will employ innovative tools and processes to attract new businesses that complement our Vision and retain existing ones.
 - **Policy 1-A:** → Collaborate with the development authority to provide financial incentives to local businesses.
 - **Activity 1-A(1)** Increase funding to existing façade restoration program by at least 4%.
 - **Policy 1-B:** → Ensure that review processes do not unnecessarily hamper (re)development.
 - **Activity 1-B(1)** Develop a simple process flowchart that the lay public can understand and provide it to each applicant at the beginning of every review process
 - **Activity 1-B(2)** Revise our zoning ordinance to provide an “expedited review” path for projects that meet a set of specified “Excellence” criteria.

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List of Community Goals

FROM THE RULES

- **List of Community Goals.** Include a listing of the goals the community seeks to achieve.

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List of Community Goals: *Examples*

- Economic Prosperity:** We encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community.
- Resource Management:** We ensure the efficient use of natural resources and we identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- Efficient Land Use:** We maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community.
- Local Preparedness:** We identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve.
- Sense of Place:** We protect and enhance our community's unique qualities.
- Regional Cooperation:** We cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs.
- Housing Options:** We provide an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community.
- Transportation Options:** We address the transportation needs, challenges and opportunities of all community residents.
- Educational Opportunities:** We make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, and pursue their life ambitions.
- Community Health:** We ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good

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List of Community Goals:

Using the QCOs as a resource

Economic Prosperity: Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

Local Preparedness: Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges; or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.

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Community Policies

FROM THE RULES

□ **Community Policies**. ...provide **ongoing guidance and direction** to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Goals. These are **general, guiding principles** that you want to help define your community.

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From Whitfield County

Community Policies: *Good Example*

Land Use

- Review and update our comprehensive plan on a regular basis to ensure planned growth, and enact appropriate growth management ordinances.
- Decisions on new development will contribute to, not take away from, our community's character and sense of place.
- Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- Seek development whose design, landscaping, lighting, signage, and scale add value to our community.
- Use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- Preserve the rural character of our community and provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community.
- Gateways and corridors will create a "sense of place" for our community.
- Encourage the development of downtown as a vibrant center of the community in order to improve overall attractiveness and local quality of life.
- Commit to creating walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community, where people have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services (grocery store, drug store) without having to travel by car.
- Creation of recreational facilities and set-aside of greenspace are important.
- Commit to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.
- Commit to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development in Greenfield (previously undeveloped) areas of the community.

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Character Areas

FROM THE RULES

□ **'Character Area'** means a specific geographic area or district within the community that:

- has **unique or special characteristics to be preserved or enhanced** (such as a downtown, a historic district, and arts district, a neighborhood, or a transportation corridor);
- has **potential to evolve into a unique area** with more intentional guidance of future development through adequate planning and implementation (such as a strip commercial corridor that could be revitalized into a more attractive village development pattern); or
- **requires special attention** due to unique development issues (rapid change of development patterns, economic decline, etc.).

□ Each character area is a planning sub-area within the community where more **detailed, small-area planning** and implementation of certain policies, investments, incentives, or regulations may be applied in order to preserve, improve, or otherwise influence its future development patterns in a manner consistent with the Community Goals.

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The Character Area Map

FROM THE RULES

- **Character Areas Map and Defining Narrative.** Identify and map the **boundaries of existing or potential character areas** (see definition in Chapter 110-12-1-.05) **covering the entire community**, including existing community sub-areas, districts, or neighborhoods. ...Community improvement districts, tax allocation districts, Livable Centers Initiative planning areas, designated redevelopment areas and the like are good candidates for delineation as character areas.

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The Character Area Map

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER


- **It's a map—apply basic, cartographic, common sense**
 - No blank spots,
 - Map & Legend should match,
 - Map and Text (Defining Narrative) should match.
 - At a high enough resolution to be easily read, not blurry
 - *A properly oriented North-arrow is always handy
- **A high-quality map can do more than simply illustrate boundaries . . .**

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From the City of Tybee Island

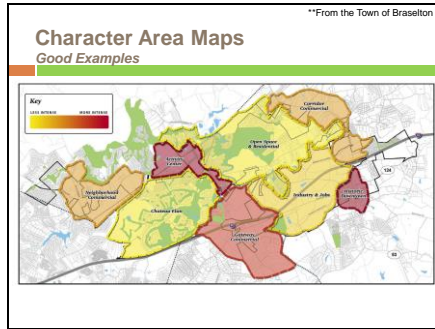
Character Area Maps

Good Examples

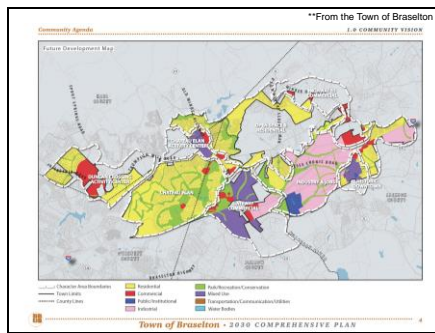


Imagined Services & Engineering
March 2008

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Character Area

Defining Narrative

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER

- ▣ Detailed discussion of EACH character area presented on the map
- ▣ Required to Include
 - ▢ Basic description with text and **illustrations/photos/etc.**
 - ▢ Allowable land uses
 - ▢ Implementation measures

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Defining Narrative Good Example



Solution Area Developing

Value: In the case of an already highly developed solution, the city by way of municipal services has to maintain a certain level and hence a sophisticated infrastructure.

Challenge: Policies
 • Urban growth in dense urban centers. But strong development requires urbanization.
 • On the other hand, density brings with it challenges that are not limited to urban factors of the city, including language and race.
 • The city has to find a way to manage urban space and ensure that the development is not only a good one, but also a good one for the city.

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Standards & Examples



A graphic featuring a central white box with a black border containing the text "NEEDS & OPPORTUNITY" in large, bold, black capital letters, with "ES" in smaller, bold, black capital letters below it. To the left of the box, the text "REQUIRE" is above "FOR all" which is above three asterisks. To the right of the box, the text "FOR all" is above three asterisks. Below the box, the text "•REQUIRED FOR ALL communities" is written in a bold, italicized, black font.

- REQUIRED FOR ALL** communities
- Update **EVERY 5 YEARS** with in-depth community involvement
- Use previous "Issues/Needs & Opportunities", current statistical and demographic data, and the QCOs as starting points.
- Like a SWOT Analysis.**

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Needs and Opportunities

FROM THE RULES

o **Needs and Opportunities.** (Required for all local governments, updates required every five years.) ... locally agreed upon list of Needs and Opportunities the community intends to address. ...The list must be developed by involving community stakeholders in carrying out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) or similar analysis of the community.

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SWOT

Strengths

Consider this from the community's point of view. Involve the citizens and organizations that make up your community. Don't be modest. Be realistic.

- *What are your advantages?*
- *What do you do well?*
- *What relevant resources are available to you?*
- *What do other people see as your strengths?*

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SWOT

Weaknesses

Consider these questions from internal and external viewpoints: Do other people/organizations seem to perceive weaknesses that you do not see? Are other communities doing better than you? It is best to be realistic now, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

- *What could your community improve?*
- *What do you do poorly?*
- *What should you avoid?*

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Opportun

1. **Scale of operations**

- *Where are the positive opportunities for your community?*
- *What are the promising trends?*

- Useful opportunities can come from such things as:

- Changes in technology and markets on both broad and narrow scales

- ### ■ Changes in government policy

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Threats

Open Access

■ *What obstacles do you face?*

- Are the threats facing your community undergoing change (more or less threatening)?

- (more or less threatening)?

- *Is changing technology threatening your position?*

- Is changing technology threatening your position?

- Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your

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- Should be comprehensive

- ❑ A simple list is *totally* acceptable—but you

- can be creative

- It should make sense for the community

- NOT a “to-do” list (that comes later)

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Needs and Opportunities

Good Example

Good Example (City of Covington)

Community Facilities and Services Issues

- Meeting the Service Demands of Explosive Population Growth.** Recently, the City has experienced rapid population growth, and thus growth is expected to continue throughout the planning horizon. With that growth has come increasing demands for public services. Careful planning is required to ensure that adequate services are available across the next 20 years.
- Diminishing Supply of Reusable Water.** Septic and land application systems are consumptive users of water. As a result, there may be future political pressure to develop new systems with surface water discharges, as opposed to continued use of septic systems or land application systems.
- Solid Waste Planning.** Both the City and County currently are contracting under a 1993 Solid Waste Master Plan. Under state law, the Solid Waste Master Plan will need to be updated by 2008.

Community Facilities and Services Opportunities

- Expanding the City's Trail System.** The County Recreational Authority has plans to expand the City's trail system, providing both recreational and practical pedestrian and bicycle connections between local housing and City destinations.

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Needs and Opportunities

Other Ideas...

- Identify observed trends or events then explain the specific needs and opportunities that may result. For example:

TREND→ Eleven percent increase in retired population since the last census.

NEEDS:

- ~Increased access to medical services
- ~Greater variety in senior-oriented recreational activities

OPPORTUNITIES:

- ~Expanded volunteer base for local nonprofits
- ~More potential daytime "neighborhood watch"

members

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Standards & Examples

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graph LR
    A[REQUIREMENTS for all] --> B[COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM]
    B --> C[Accomplishments]
  
```

- **REQUIRED FOR ALL** communities
 - Update **EVERY 5 YEARS** with in-depth community involvement.
 - A Report of Accomplishments and a new Five-Year Work Program.
 - Report of Accomplishments = Status Report
 - Work Program = "To Do" List
 - Use previous Work Program as a starting point.

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Community Work Program

Report of Accomplishments

Report of Accomplishments

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER

- Report on the status of all the projects that were included on the last work program approved by DCA
- This is REALLY simple. Don't over-think it.
- It looks just like an STWP. Addition of columns for "Completed", "In-Progress", "Postponed", "Not Accomplished/Cancelled" Try to use the standard terms:
 - Completed = the project is finished, the program is established
 - Ongoing = the project is started, work to complete it will continue
 - Postponed = work did not start at the expected time, but will in the future
 - Not Accomplished = cancelled, will not be carried forward
- Any item noted "Postponed/Cancelled" Requires an explanation"
 - Nothing "in-Progress" or "Postponed" must be carried over into the new Work Program. Items postponed beyond five years can be added in a new section for "Long-Term Projects" if you prefer.

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Community Work Program

FROM THE RULES

Community Work Program. (Required for all local governments, updates required every five years.)
...the **specific activities** the community plans to undertake during the next five years ...This includes **any activities, initiatives, programs, ordinances, administrative systems** ... (Note that **general policy statements should not be included in the Community Work Program**, but instead should be included in the Policies section of the Community Goals.) ...

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Community Work Program

FROM THE RULES, cont'd.

The Community Work Program must include the following information for each listed activity:

- Brief description of the activity;
- Legal authorization for the activity, if applicable;
- Timeframe for initiating and completing the activity;
- Responsible party for implementing the activity;
- Estimated cost (if any) of implementing the activity; and
- Funding source(s), if applicable.

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Community Work Program

IMPORTANT BITS TO REMEMBER

- This is simple. There's a basic template that most communities use—blanks are filled in.
- This is the place for specific projects/activities. Avoid "projects" that begin with words like "encourage", "promote" and "consider."
- Focuses both on the projects that will incrementally move you toward your vision over the long-term—**AND**— the projects that are necessary to meet the community's immediate needs
- No clear responsible party, cost estimate, funding source, and/or start and end dates → Probably a policy statement or a non-specific project

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¹⁴From the City of Union City

Community Work Program

Good Example

Community Agency: **Union City Department of Public Works** Date: **June 2018**

Type of Action Strategy	Action Implementation Strategy	Responsible Party	Time Frame					Cost	Funding Source	Strategy Ref. Number
			11	12	13	14	15			
Inventory: Assessments	Develop an inventory of vacant and/or underused lots and parcels in the city to identify sites that are suitable for development and redevelopment.	City Staff	✓	✓				\$0	GP	SP-4.1
Inventory: Assessments	Develop an inventory of vacant and/or underused lots and parcels in the city to identify sites that are suitable for development and redevelopment.	City Staff	✓	✓				\$0	GP	SP-4.1
Inventory: Assessments	Conduct housing study to identify housing needs in the city (including affordable housing).	City Staff	✓	✓				\$0	GP	SP-4.1, SP-4.2, SP-4.3
Inventory: Assessments	Develop a market study to determine demand for shopping, dining and entertainment options.	City Staff	✓					\$0	GP	SP-4.1, SP-4.2, SP-4.3
Inventory: Assessments	Develop assessment of existing infrastructure network and identify improvement needs.	City Staff	✓					\$0	GP	SP-4.1, SP-4.2, SP-4.3
Phase Plan: Final Plan	Develop corridor master plan for U-COR-Road Use and S-COR-Residential area.	City Staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	\$100K	GP	SP-4.1, SP-4.2, SP-4.3, SP-4.4, SP-4.5

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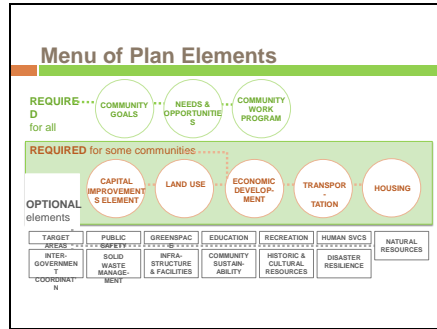
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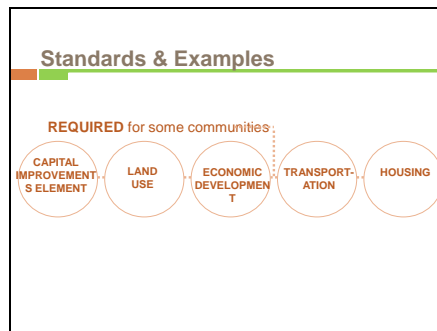
Other Ideas...

Description	Responsible Party	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Reference
Install Trees in Historic District (authority: 2011 Street Enhancement Program, adopted 10/10/2011)	PW&A, Cdev, Hist			10 Trees/year, 3 years, \$150/per tree; \$4500 total			Goals: 1-3 Pols: 3a, 4b N/O: 13-15
Construct New City Hall (authority: CIE / Impact Fee Program, adopted 04/05/2012)	See below			Max = \$1.56M			
Property Acquisition	Commission, Fin	\$300					Goals: 5 Pols: 3b-f, 4a-b N/O: 4, 5-7, 16, 21
Design	Consultant TBD, Cdev, Hist	~\$100K					
Build	Consultant TBD, PW&A, Cdev			~\$1.15M			
Buffer / Contingency	As needed					X	

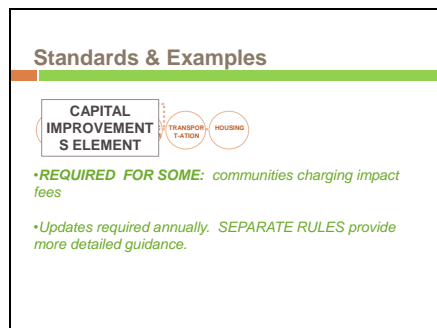
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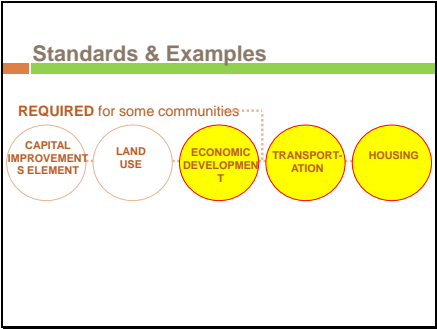
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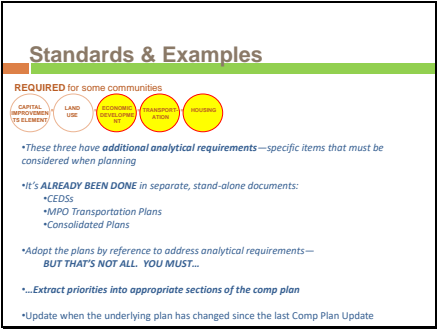
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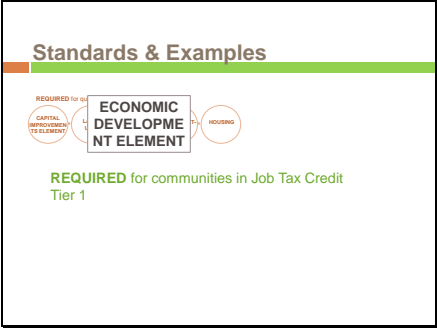
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Standards & Examples

Diagram illustrating the relationship between standards and examples:

- REQUIRED** for qualifying communities
- TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT** (Central Element)
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** (Related Element)

REQUIRED for communities in an MPO

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11From the Columbus-Phoenix City Long Range Transportation Plan

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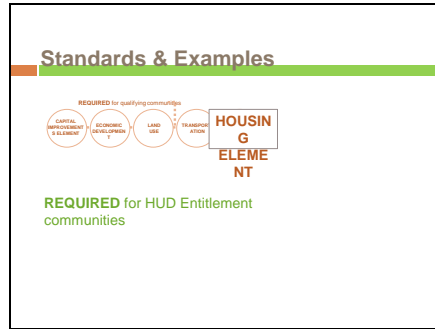
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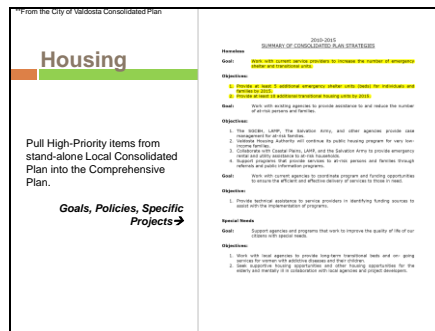
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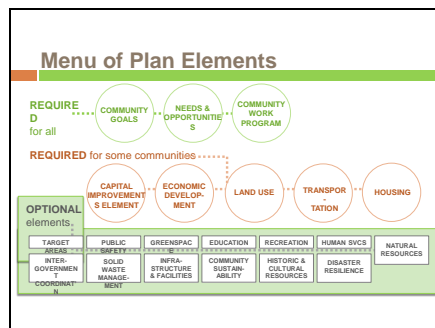
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Optional Elements

- Any of the 5 "Required for Some" elements can be used as "Optional" elements for other communities
- You can take the "Required for Some" approach with any other free-standing plans you may have. Greenspace Plans, Rec Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, LCIs, Water/Sewer Plans, etc.
- If you don't have a free-standing, special purpose plan, this might be a good segue into that, or you might be able to simply wrap it into the comp planning process by just focusing very closely on it during plan development.

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Submitting a Plan

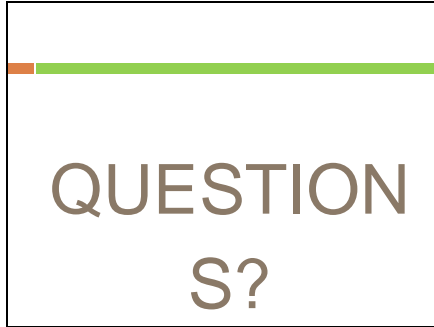
- Before Approval: Certification Letter
 - Public Hearings were Conducted as Required by Law
 - Regional Water Plan was Consulted
 - "Part 5" Environmental Planning Criteria were Reviewed
- After Approval: Adoption Resolution
 - Proves the plan was officially adopted by the local government. Legally grounds the plan and makes it the official foundation for future development decisions.

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FAQs

- Some things change and get updated, others stay the same. What do we submit?
- What if we choose to plan early?
- What about Plan Amendments?
- What about Joint Plans?

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